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NECROLOGY.

CHARLES C. PERKINS.

Short as the life of this Journal has been—hardly more than a year—it already has to mourn the loss of one of its editorial staff, in the recent death of Mr. Charles C. Perkins of Boston. Mr. Perkins was doubtless the best known of American writers upon the fine arts. All his life had been given to study of the practice, the history, and the archæology of art in its various forms. His early years, after his graduation from Harvard, he gave to European study, at first in music. In this he not only acquired skill enough to play the piano in public on special occasion, but devoted himself to the theory of music, and practised its composition. Not limiting himself, as do most amateurs, to its lighter forms, he tried the highest walks of composition, writing chamber music—piano trios, string quartettes, and even that most exacting of all, from which most American composers have shrunk, the string quintette. While in Paris he studied painting under Ary Schaeffer, and afterwards practised etching with Bracquemond and Lalanne. The study of the arts of design ended in diverting his energies from the practice of music, although to the end of his days he was a warm amateur and promoter of it, retaining the presidency of the Handel and Haydn society of Boston, and being always among the leaders of musical patronage. These varied studies and his extending artistic interest led him to a wide connoisseurship in all the arts; it is in this aspect that he was best known at home. There was hardly a branch of art which he did not study, and in which he did not aspire to more than an amateur's knowledge; and there was no artistic movement of importance in his own community in which he did not share.

It was in the history and archæology of the fine arts that Mr. Perkins's best work was done. During a long residence in Italy his attention was specially turned to the study of early Italian sculpture. The product of this study was his *magnum opus*, his work on Tuscan sculptors, published by Longmans in 1864 in two richly illustrated quarto volumes, and completed four years later by a like volume on Italian sculptors. In this he brought to notice the neglected works of the great forerunners and early leaders of the Italian Renaissance. The work gave him at once a prominent place among writers upon art. It covered ground which before his

time had hardly been touched, and being the fruit of independent labor, from first-hand sources consulted on the spot, it carried the authority both of a pioneer and of an expert. The ability, unusual in a writer, to illustrate his work by etchings and drawings from his own hand, added to its éclat. These volumes have not been so well known or so highly honored at home, where special students in their field are rare; but their value was quickly acknowledged by European scholars, and won for Mr. Perkins the rare distinction of a corresponding membership of the Institute of France. So completely did he take possession of his subject that his work, though now twenty years old, has not ceased to be quoted as the leading authority for it.

The qualifications and the reputation so acquired made him, on his return home, helpful and influential in a community which was beginning to be stirred by a new enthusiasm for the arts and their literature. The systems of instruction in music, drawing, and design which were established in the schools of Boston and the rest of Massachusetts were mainly due to his initiative. He was active in the building of the Music Hall at Boston, and furnished at his own cost the fine bronze statue of Beethoven by Crawford, which is its chief ornament, for the model of which, it is due to Crawford to say, the sculptor refused to be paid. The Museum of Fine Arts in that city owes its being and its form more to his energy and enterprise than to those of any other man, and in recognition of this he was made and has remained its Honorary Director. He wrote the descriptive catalogue of the sculpture gallery in this museum, and his interest in its collections and zeal for their enlargement were unflagging.

In the midst of these public cares, Mr. Perkins's literary activity and productiveness were remarkable. His reputation as an authority in the history of art, and as a critic, made him sought after. He delivered many lectures and addresses, was a contributor to many American and foreign periodicals, was one of the leading writers for the *American Art Review*, and has furnished a number of articles to this *Journal*, of which he was one of the editorial contributors. He edited and annotated the American edition of Eastlake's "*Hints on Household Taste*," as well as the translation of Dr. Falke's "*Art in the House*," a work of like subject but larger scope. Eight years ago he published a comparative study entitled "*Raphael and Michelangelo*," a critical and biographical essay. Somewhat later he condensed into a single large octavo the substance of his *Tuscan Sculptors and Italian Sculptors*, with the additional material needed to justify a larger range and its title of "*An Historical Handbook of Italian Sculpture*." He was the critical editor of the monumental "*Cyclopædia of Painters and Paintings*" which Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons are now publishing, the ms. of which, it is understood, is complete. His last finished work, issued

this year, aptly closed the cycle of his literary labor, and brought him back to the field of his first successes. It is a monograph on Ghiberti, a handsome illustrated quarto published by Rouam of Paris, written in French as one of the series of his *Bibliothèque internationale de l'Art*, at the request of its editor and his friend M. Eugène Müntz. At the time of his death he was busy, we are told, with the material for a treatise on The Science of Beauty, which he had begun to write.

A career like Mr. Perkins's is full of example for a stirring, money-loving community, where the busy are tempted to grasping self-absorption, and the rich to idle indulgence. Born to wealth, and with every opportunity for a life of luxurious ease, he led a life of untiring industry, of equal devotion to his private studies and his public duties. His social grace won him favor everywhere; his public spirit, enterprise, and single-mindedness gave effect to his advocacy of public undertakings for the furtherance of the arts; his interest, his activity, and when there was occasion his purse, were ready for whatever seemed to him to encourage them. He has left his mark on the literature of art and archæology, and on the institutions of his own city.
